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ABSTRACT

Results of a large set of interviews and discussions conducted by the National Employer Leadership Council showed that approximately 23,000 businesspeople were involved in school-to-career partnerships in Colorado, as of January 1997. Colorado employers identified 12 lessons essential to efforts to build school-to-career systems: (1) recognize, articulate, and develop an organized response to a common need; (2) utilize a common framework to gather and organize information; (3) focus on initial partnership development; (4) involve all stakeholders from the outset; (5) recognize and give consideration to organizational and cultural differences; (6) prioritize areas of emphasis and make strategic use of resources; (7) incorporate flexibility to allow local resources and needs to shape partnerships' components; (8) emphasize the importance of coordinating strategies; (9) use data to inform progress and guide strategies; (10) recognize the value of external support; (11) recognize the value of internal support; and (12) work to institutionalize school-to-career efforts in order to build a sustainable system. Colorado employers also identified barriers to further progress. Among the items requested by employers were the following: access to high-quality information; improved coordination around teacher preparation; clearer definition of roles; and assistance from the national level to align existing systems and programs with an eye toward sustainability. (MN)

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"We Need To Be In It For All 9 Innings"

Lessons from Employer Participation in School-to-Career in Colorado

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Prepared for
The National Employer Leadership Council

by Susan Hubbard
Amy Bell
Ivan Charner

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The **National Employer Leadership Council** (NELC) is a coalition of CEOs from a diverse group of private sector companies with a shared vision for our nation's workforce. The mission of the Council is to enhance the quality of the nation's workforce and to improve the productivity and competitiveness of American businesses through work-based learning opportunities for all students. To accomplish this, the NELC hopes to energize and mobilize the business community around the school-to-work initiative in collaboration with other stakeholders, including other business organizations, school systems, labor and public sector organizations, parents, students, and state, federal, and community leaders.

The NELC gratefully acknowledges the financial support of American Express, BellSouth, Charles Schwab & Co., Eastman Kodak Company, Ford Motor Company, Manpower, Inc., McDonald's USA, and Siemens Corporation. The NELC is also funded in part by a School-to-Work Opportunities Grant from the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor.

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"We Need To Be In It For All 9 Innings"

Lessons from Employer Participation
in School-to-Career in Colorado

By:

Susan Hubbard
Amy Bell
Ivan Charner

Academy for Educational Development
National Institute for Work and Learning

Prepared for:

The National Employer Leadership Council

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report documents the lessons learned when the National Employer Leadership Council (NELC) partnered with the state of Colorado to provide support around developing, sustaining, and expanding employer partnerships with school-to-career initiatives in Colorado communities. It is framed around the NELC Employer Participation Model, and it addresses three major issues: what employers are doing, what the breakthroughs and successful strategies are, and what additional support employers need.

What are employers doing?

Employers are participating in a broad continuum of activities in Colorado. Statewide, regional, and local examples abound: in the inspiration and support generated by the CEO of Norwest Banks as statewide School-to-Career Advocate; in Kodak's breakthrough in using NELC's Employer Participation Model to coordinate the efforts of regional employers; and in the pioneering work of Charles Schwab to systematically provide in-depth work-based experiences for youth and faculty in the Denver area. The strong leadership roles illustrated by these examples are echoed in communities throughout Colorado: as of January 1997, approximately 23,000 business people were involved in school-to-career partnerships.

What are the breakthroughs and successful strategies?

Employers in Colorado identified twelve "breakthroughs" or lessons that were essential to their efforts to build school-to-career systems. In the full report, each breakthrough is followed by one or more strategies that a company or partnership has been using.

1. Recognize, articulate, and develop an organized response to a common need.
2. Utilize a common framework--such as NELC's Employer Participation Model--to gather and organize information.
3. Focus on initial partnership development as a very important stage.
4. Involve all stakeholders--from the very beginning, if possible.
5. Recognize and take into account organizational/cultural differences.
6. Prioritize areas of emphasis and make strategic use of resources.
7. Build in flexibility to allow local resources and needs to shape components of the partnership.
8. Emphasize the importance of coordinating strategies.
9. Use data to inform progress and guide strategies.
10. Recognize the value of *external* support.
11. Recognize the value of *internal* support.
12. Work to institutionalize school-to-career in order to build a strong, sustainable system.

What do employers need?

Employers also identified barriers to further progress, actions they need to take to overcome them, and the support they need to aid them in these endeavors. In their work with students and teachers, employers feel they would benefit from access to quality information, a better understanding of data collection programs, improved coordination around teacher preparation, and more clearly defined roles. In terms of strengthening company practices, employers indicate they need to prepare their employees to work more effectively with students and teachers. They also need to generate company support. Employers suggest that external support, parental involvement, strategies to involve small businesses in school-to-career partnerships, and improvements in business-education communication/coordination will ultimately help them build better systems. Finally, employers are looking for assistance from the national level and are working to align existing systems and programs with an eye towards sustainability.❖

I. INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 1996, the National Employer Leadership Council (NELC) undertook a partnership with the state of Colorado to provide support around developing, sustaining, and expanding employer partnerships with school-to-career initiatives in Colorado communities. NELC approached this project with the goals of offering assistance in areas identified by the selected communities; documenting the challenges faced and lessons learned; and sharing this information with NELC members and others committed to forging strong, sustainable partnerships between employers and school-to-career communities.

The purpose of this report is to document and share the lessons learned in NELC's effort to support employer participation in school-to-career partnerships. The focus is on employers and their responsibilities, activities, leadership roles, and needs. However, school-to-career initiatives are by definition collaborative partnerships, and employer efforts occur in conjunction with other partners in state and local school-to-career systems. For that reason, the report maintains its focus on employers but places the information within the context of the broader school-to-career partnership.

The report, based on a large set of interviews and discussions, explores what was learned from experiences in Colorado. It is framed around broad categories of employer participation as set forth in the NELC Employer Participation Model (EPM), and it addresses three major questions that NELC members have identified related to employer participation in School-to-Career initiatives:

- What are employers doing?
- What are the breakthroughs and successful strategies?
- What do employers need?

At the core of the report is the idea that systems change takes time and requires the building and maintenance of strong partnerships at the local and state levels. As one employer stated, "We need to be in it (school-to-career reform) for all nine innings."

The report is in no way an evaluation of the activities that were observed; rather, it documents what is currently occurring and what is planned, and offers lessons learned from the communities in the form of identified successful strategies and remaining needs.

Brief history of project

When NELC began this project in the fall of 1996, it was with the recognition that employers are members of different kinds of communities and face different challenges at the state, regional, and local levels; therefore the emphasis was on selecting a state that had system pieces in place to support employer participation. The state of Colorado had some areas that they were still working on, but they had major pieces in place and partners already working together, including:

- A well-structured, active school-to-career initiative. School-to-career in Colorado is housed at the Governor's level, with excellent management, a clear sub-state structure, and active

community partnerships throughout the state. Colorado received a federal school-to-work grant in October 1995.

- State-level partnerships already in place. Colorado had all of the primary stakeholders (K-12 education, higher education, and employers) at the table exploring how to build on existing successes to fit the pieces under the school-to-career paradigm. Colorado had an active interagency team that was working on plans to further reduce duplications and structure effective partnerships at the state level across agencies, including the Governor's Workforce Coordinating Council and Colorado's one-stop system.

- Clear, active leadership from the employer community. Colorado had articulated a clear leadership role for employers from the beginning, in their state school-to-career grant, and committed employers filled those roles and expanded their ranks with other employers.

Thus Colorado was selected, and with the support of the state School-to-Career Director, NELC staff identified three local communities for the next step. These sites represented the types of communities that businesses are most likely to find themselves working with locally around school-to-career. Broadly speaking, they represented developing, sustaining, and expanding partnerships.

Developing communities are defined as those at a start-up or very basic level, with no school-to-career system in place and no sustained history of employers and educators working together. **Sustaining** communities are those in which there are connections that support school-to-career between employers and educators, but where there are also some tensions as the groups struggle to coalesce and structure a meaningful system. **Expanding** communities are those in which individual districts have reached their school-to-career goals and have decided that it is time to expand from a single district programmatic approach to a regional approach.

NELC's role in these communities was to provide support, not direction. NELC staff supported employers, educators, and community members in these communities as they scaled up employer involvement. Rather than functioning as a change agent, NELC staff listened and provided assistance as identified by the communities themselves. Two NELC staff members, including the executive director and a senior program person, drew on their expertise in developing active employer partnerships to assist the communities in Colorado between the fall of 1996 and the spring of 1997. Between the spring and fall of 1997, NELC asked the Academy for Educational Development to document the lessons learned about employer participation from the Colorado project.

II. What are Employers Doing?

Employers throughout the state of Colorado have become actively involved in schools and are taking advantage of opportunities to work directly with students and teachers. In hopes of sustaining these efforts, business leaders are beginning to look within their own organizations for ways to provide additional support for these and other activities in years to come. They are starting and nurturing new partnerships and building on existing ones, in many cases expanding them to include not only more employers, but also more representatives from schools, school districts, and the community at-large in an effort to promote and enhance student learning experiences. As of January 1997, 23,000 business people were involved in school-to-career in the state. The following section provides an overview of some of the many ways that employers are participating in and leading school-to-career initiatives in Colorado and provides a sampling of examples from throughout the state.

Employers working with students and teachers

One of the most obvious ways that Colorado employers are getting involved in school-to-career partnerships is by working directly with students and teachers. Employer involvement in these kinds of activities ranges from career talks by business people in classrooms to employer assistance with school-based enterprises and aid to teachers in curriculum development.

- **Employers working with students:** Throughout the state, employers are working directly with students to help them explore careers and to provide them with opportunities to test their skills and interests in hands-on settings. Employer participation levels vary in form and intensity and involve young people at all stages of development. For instance, some employers participate in career awareness activities through Career Talks, Career Days/Career Fairs, and Workplace and Industry Tours; others are involved in career exploration activities such as Job Shadowing; and many take part in career preparation activities such as internships, Cooperative Education, school-based enterprises, and entrepreneurial projects.

  Both the Ford Academy of Manufacturing Sciences (FAMS) and Young AmeriTowne are designed to provide young people with work-based skills and experiences. Ford will be establishing a pilot site for FAMS, a program that helps students learn the skills they need to pursue careers in manufacturing, engineering, and other skilled trades, in the Pikes Peak region of Colorado. Once the FAMS pilot program is up and running, Ford will offer two models for students: one that begins in the 10th grade and another that begins in the 9th grade. In addition, Young AmeriTowne, a program that offers a work-based learning component for middle school students, will be opening in Jefferson County next fall, and a Rural AmeriTowne will open in spring, 1998.

  Many employers in Colorado offer internships to young people in an effort to help them learn about different kinds of jobs and prepare them for the future. Students interning in businesses work for employers, learning about industry and business operations, and actively participate as members of the workforce, becoming acclimated to the culture and executing assigned tasks. In Summit County, twenty to thirty students participated in internships with area employers

during the fall. Most of the experiences in Summit County are designed for students in their junior and senior years. Employers pay the students and work with local partnerships to help the students receive credits, on the premise that compensation promotes accountability. In another community, 1000 students have been placed with employers, including Eastman Kodak, Hewlett Packard, Anheuser Busch, and a number of smaller businesses through the Chamber of Commerce.

IN ROADS, a national program being implemented in Denver, focuses on minority preparedness for careers in businesses, health care, and engineering. Interns work in the private sector during their senior year in high school, attend weekly training seminars during the summer, work 40 hours in industry, and then receive college scholarships to continue studying. Kaiser Permanente pays for six students ($3500 per student) to participate in IN ROADS in the Denver area.

- **Employers working with teachers:** Employers throughout the state are working with educators in an effort to show them how academic theories and lessons are applied in the workplace. To date, most of these efforts have focused on providing teachers with training and externships.

A number of employers have offered to train teachers in different aspects of business and business management, so that they might better understand what goes on in the workplace and the similarities and differences between the workplace environment and the environment at school. For instance, Charles Schwab reserves slots in all of its management training classes and invites interested educators to attend. The company also facilitates periodic in-service training for teachers and administrators. Representatives from Ford's FAMS indicated that pulling together a group of educators for FAMS teacher training is one of the next big steps in readying the pilot site.

Teacher externships provide educators with an opportunity to spend some time applying academic theories and lessons from their areas of expertise to solve problems and complete specified tasks in the workplace. For instance, at the time of the interviews, two hundred teachers in Denver had been placed in externships at over thirty different sites. Eastman Kodak offers externships and sabbaticals in business. They have begun to offer a ten-week program in the summer, employing teachers in the company's Colorado Division and establishing opportunities for each teacher to lead a specified project on-site. Kodak also employs teachers as trainers and facilitators on two-year assignments in the workforce development area.

- **Employers supporting the work of teachers:** Businesses in the state support educators by assisting and advising them in curriculum and module development as they attempt to engage young people and make learning more relevant.

In Greeley, 60 teachers were involved in the two-day "Partner Up" mentor program. Teachers spent a day with business people at their companies and then, to promote even further understanding and communication between business people and educators, the business people spent a day with teachers in the classroom. The pairs continue to work together for at least a

year in a self-directed manner to develop projects and curriculum based on their newfound knowledge.

A clinical team from Lutheran Medical worked with middle school life science teachers on curriculum development. The team and teachers met on a bi-weekly basis, and their work together resulted in on-site shadows and, ultimately, an enhanced curriculum with a wellness and career message woven into it. The hospital also made learning modules available. Lutheran provided both consulting services and materials, and a full-blown partnership emerged by the end of the year. A similar process was followed to redesign the physical science curriculum the next year. The program has been expanded to a second middle school and two high schools.

The Med Track Program (with the Denver Public Education and Business Coalition) is a health care program for high school students that, as a pre-post survey shows, is resulting in an increased interest in health careers on the part of participating students. Medical and technical employees work with teachers to give relevance to curriculum and classroom activities. The project-based curriculum relates real world issues to physics, math, science, and chemistry using case studies.

Employers strengthening company practice

Businesses are also examining their own operations and organizational structures to ensure that their policies support school-to-career and workforce development. Employers are working in such areas as: establishing new criteria for employment; going peer-to-peer to advocate the value of school-to-career; re-aligning resources to support employee involvement in school-to-career; communicating their expectations; and encouraging employee development through school-to-career.

- **Enhancing employment practices:** In the area of enhancing employment practices, many employers are looking to validate the hard work students have done in school by using schools' evaluations in making hiring decisions. Towards this end, the partnership in Fort Collins and the Fort Collins Chamber initiated CAP PACT. Employers have agreed to ask students applying for jobs for their CAP (Career and Academic Plan, begun in the 8th grade) portfolios. The portfolios provide students with a venue to showcase their work and enable employers to evaluate student job applicants objectively. Similarly, Eastman Kodak plans to require transcripts as a part of the hiring process.

- **Getting the word out, extending corporate leadership:** Many employers are working to engage other employers and educate their peers about the connection between a good education, grounded in hands-on experiences, and success later in life. For instance, Colorado's School-to-Career Advocate is an employer who travels around the state promoting school-to-career in communities, colleges, schools, and businesses (see Breakthrough #10). Coors educated its vendors about school-to-career, and now one of the trucking companies that it uses actively participates in school-to-career activities. In the Pikes Peak region, Norwest Bank is co-sponsoring a breakfast for superintendents of schools and CEOs to promote communications and dialogue between these two groups.

In the fall of 1997, the Pikes Peak school-to-career partnership held an event to celebrate the official merging of its Metropolitan partnership with its Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) partnership. Business supporters suggested that the event include informative sessions on issues in industry led by industry trainers; for example, Learning Organizations, Change Management, and Labor Market Trends. Educators participating in the session were excited to learn about business concepts and language, and ultimately requested follow-up classes and training in these issues. Educators began looking at themselves not just as teachers, but also as employees. This resulted in a shift in the way they were thinking about their own workplace--now it's not only a school, but also an organization. Business people and teachers are both more aware of the similarities between the workplace and the classroom.

In the spring of 1997, staff from McDonald's Corporation in Chicago introduced its Youth Apprenticeship Program first to Denver-area franchise holders and managers, and then to 48 employers, educators, and community leaders in Denver area School-to-Career partnerships. McDonald's staff also talked about a collaboration of major scale and impact across the Consumer Service Industry that will link teachers to McDonald's training and prepare students for careers. Educators were encouraged to hear that the program requires full integration of classroom and workplace learning. Its goals are threefold: to meet or exceed academic and workplace standards; to complete high school and transition to postsecondary school/training or employment; and to pursue management careers in industry. Several individual Colorado partnerships took the next step and contacted local franchise owners whose participation is a requisite.

- **Encouraging employees to become involved and aligning corporate resources:** Employers have also begun to adopt policies and redesign practices to incorporate school-to-career into their workplaces and to encourage employees to become involved.

Charles Schwab, for example, offers flexible working time and is gearing the work schedule around Denver Public Schools' schedules so that students can come into the workplace and gain work-based experience. Eastman Kodak is offering to sponsor assessments of kids to show parents where they are on a continuum of job readiness, and Kodak employees are encouraged to volunteer their services to help expand existing learning experiences and create new ones. Corporate resources are aligned with corporate goals in support of K-16 education, philanthropy is focused, and volunteerism is coordinated through the office.

The Partnership coordinator in Pikes Peak plans to ask the larger businesses in the area to create "hour banks." Each company will decide how many hours it can donate to the bank. Employee volunteers will use the donated hours to participate in school-to-career activities as defined by NELC in the Employer Participation Model. Once a company decides to participate, the partnership will make a brief presentation to interested employees on school-to-career and possible forms of involvement. Volunteers will be asked to fill out information cards, and this information will be entered into a database to facilitate matching the volunteers with requests educators make for assistance.

Norwest Banks operates 90 branches across the state. The local branches are required by headquarters to be both business champions and partnership champions and are given considerable latitude in deciding how to participate. Local branch presidents are evaluated, in part, on their participation and effectiveness in school-to-career activities within their communities. This is an easy sell to bank managers and employees, as it ties into and supports the company philosophy of responsive community banking.

At a state level, the State Tech Prep/School-to-Career Advisory Committee has taken on a mission of creating, revising, and implementing outreach presentations given to community and educational groups such as Rotaries, schools, school boards, and Chambers of Commerce. Fifty presentations were made between September 1996 and October 1997. Last year's emphasis was on "What is School-to-Career," moving this year into collecting data on "What Works and Why in Colorado Schools." The Employer Participation Model and how to use it has also been added to the presentation. NELC employer partners on the state advisory committee will be opening speakers at seven guidance and counseling workshops to be held regionally throughout the state besides the presentations and workshops.

- **Communicating employer expectations:** In addition, many employers are searching for ways to communicate to educators and the community what the future workplace will look like and what skills workers will need to perform successfully in the workplace of the future. Some are assessing the skills needed in the workplace and the skills that students have; others are working on establishing content standards. For instance, the Greeley partnership is using SCANS to pull together workforce competencies. Businesses will endorse these competencies and validate the content standards.

- **Encouraging employee development:** Many companies find that, through their participation in school-to-work initiatives, they are afforded an excellent opportunity to develop their own employees. For example, more than one company uses internal newsletters to profile champions in the company who support education priorities. Other employers embark on activities to prepare their employees to supervise students. Eastman Kodak has incorporated skill standards as a framework internally, setting standards for each job at the plant site, and has used this framework to create developmental plans for their current workforce.

Employers building a system

Employers are working in partnership with other employers and educators to understand school-to-career and to define objectives, methods for achieving these objectives, and roles for different stakeholders to play in creating and sustaining school-to-career efforts within their communities. Across the state of Colorado, employers are opening up the lines of communication and working together to develop plans for implementing school-to-career. They are working to coordinate activities and are exploring other local opportunities for work-based learning.

- **Coordinating efforts and designing systems:** In a number of communities, business representatives sit on advisory committees and school-to-career leadership sits in on business advisory committees. In addition, employers, with a renewed focus, are attending business and education conferences to help provide continuity of definition and coordination of efforts.

  Eastman Kodak began examining its activities in relation to NELC's Employer Participation Model and saw that they were scattered rather than focused or organized. They also realized that one company alone cannot offer all of the opportunities students and teachers need. Consequently, Kodak introduced the Northern Colorado Workforce Issues Alliance to the Employer Participation Model and won an agreement that its members would use the model as a guide to see that collectively they cover the areas listed and that they would share the load.

  Employers, large and small, were among the 25 original members of the planning committee in the Pikes Peak region. (The other members included representatives from the school districts, non-profits, and one community college.) Employers helped to frame the system by indicating that they didn't want to deal with separate requests from each district. They suggested that the four metropolitan districts be merged for school-to-career purposes. The resulting structure served four districts and 65,000 students across district lines. About a year ago the Metropolitan group approached BOCES (12 school districts). The resulting merger of the Metropolitan partnership and the BOCES partnership coordinated the efforts of 16 school districts, serving 90,000 plus students, and covering 3,200 square miles.

  For implementation purposes, Colorado is divided into six regions, each of which has a School-to-Career Resource Center. The Resource Centers provide the information, technical assistance, training, and communication linkages necessary for the local partnerships to build school-to-career opportunities in their respective regions. The Regional Council in Metro Denver, 51 percent of which is comprised by business, serves as an Advisory Board that provides guidance to the regional School-to-Career Resource Center. The Resource Center produces resources for all stakeholders--students, teachers, business, and local partnership coordinators. The Public Education and Business Coalition houses the Resource Center which has a database of hundreds of businesses that are willing to work with schools, teachers, and students.

- **Exploring local opportunities for work-based learning:** Businesses identify opportunities for kids to gain work-based experiences within their own organizations. Many are using their connections and resources to explore and expand opportunities for work-based learning within the community at-large.

  In Summit County, the partnership developed proposals for work-based learning opportunities to send to bigger companies. They sent a proposal to a local ski area, hoping to develop a means to involve students in different aspects of the business. In addition, the partnership is exploring ways to get the hospitality industry more involved in providing work-based learning opportunities for kids.

Chambers of Commerce often serve as the link between businesses and education in school-to-career partnerships by identifying needs in one and matching them with resources from the other. The Chamber in Summit is developing an inventory/match-up process, while the Chamber in Jefferson County is in the process of working with the school system to put together a resource center. The center will help schools identify what they need and want from business, and the Chamber will then work with businesses to meet those needs.

III. Breakthroughs and Successful Strategies

The "breakthroughs" in this section are those broad lessons that employers have identified as essential knowledge in building a school-to-career system. A breakthrough represents the sudden or gradual "aha" of recognition of the importance of a system piece or partner. This comprehension is often the first step to overcoming a barrier or area of difficulty. Each breakthrough is followed by one or more strategies that companies and partnerships have been using. The breakthroughs and strategies focus on employers within the context of school-to-career systems so that the roles or observations of other partners (vis à vis employers) may be discussed. This report is by no means exhaustive; no attempt is made to include each community that developed strategies around individual breakthroughs. Instead, the report documents a selection of the innovative ways that companies and communities have worked to build high-quality school-to-career systems. The twelve lessons below were common to many of the employers interviewed for this study, though the accompanying strategies are often unique to a company or a community.

I. Recognize, articulate, and develop an organized response to a common need.

The first step in employers mobilizing their community to respond to a need is identifying that need, making sure that everyone who is affected by it is aware of it, and developing a joint, organized response. An understanding of the need and a belief in joint action help in developing a firm commitment and avoiding barriers. In order to create a firm foundation from which to mobilize others, employers in Colorado emphasize the importance of this awareness and understanding.

Strategy: Eastman Kodak's Colorado division recognized a need common to employers in northern Colorado. Like other employers in many industries in the region, Kodak identified a shortage of qualified entry-level employees. Kodak took the leadership in articulating that need and enrolling other employers in the effort to recognize and address it. Working together as the Workforce Issues Alliance, these companies brought awareness of the gap in the workforce to the broader community and began to develop an organized, strategic response.

Strategy: An intermediary organization or individual can also serve as the coordinator among employers to share information and gather feedback. Many employers in Pikes Peak wanted to participate in school-to-career with some form of direct service, but were unsure of how to be involved in planning the partnership. At the same time, local economists were pointing to the fact that in a few years the area will not have enough workers to fill the available jobs and that productivity will suffer as a result. The School-to-Career Coordinator is serving as the point of contact to carry this message to employers and discuss how schools--the suppliers of the entry-level workforce--can work with employers to improve the skills of the future workforce. In addition, the Pikes Peak Chamber of Commerce is serving an intermediary function and inviting CEOs to participate in focus group sessions, which will be facilitated by educators, so that the partnership can obtain feedback on employer needs as they establish One Stop Career Centers.

2. Utilize a common framework--such as NELC's Employer Participation Model--to gather and organize information.

Once employers have identified a joint need and start to develop a collective response, they need some type of common framework in order to gather and organize information. A common framework provides consistent definitions, ensures that each employer can offer and have access to the same types of information, and helps companies recognize how their initiatives fit into a larger school-to-career system. In particular, many employers in Colorado pointed to NELC's Employer Participation Model (EPM) as a useful tool for facilitating the organization of information, weaving together the "big picture" of compartmentalized programmatic pieces, and developing a strategic response.

Strategy: Kodak recognized the need for structure in their efforts to bring together a group of companies in northern Colorado and identified the NELC EPM as a useful tool to organize information. Employers in the group, and eventually employers throughout the region, filled out a brief survey based on the EPM to provide an inventory of activities. The EPM served several purposes: first, it provided structure to allow employers across industries in a geographic region to see the "big picture" of initiatives in the area and how they could all fit together. Relatedly, the EPM allowed them to see how educational programs that employers may not have identified as "school-to-career" actually did fit into the regional system; they may not have thought they were doing anything or had anything to contribute, but the framework the EPM provided showed that they did. And finally, the EPM gave employers the opportunity to recognize that they didn't always have to reinvent the wheel; they could use someone else's tools to organize themselves.

Strategy: The School-to-Career Partnership in Summit County used the framework of the EPM to develop employer and teacher surveys around what they have and would like to have in place for their school-to-career system. The Partnership sent out the surveys to educators through the school system and to employers through groups such as the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, Optimists, and others. The Partnership plans to develop a database and, in the meantime, is developing a hard-copy Resource Guide based on survey results. Both the process and the products have been valuable: the process of developing and conducting the survey has spurred regional cooperation with nearby counties that want to link into the database; and the survey form itself was recently accepted for use at the regional level. The Adams County partnership also used the EPM to develop a survey, but in order to increase the response rate from busy employers, the School-to-Career Coordinator shortened the business survey to one page.

Strategy: NELC worked with the Pikes Peak School-to-Career Partnership to cull through project documentation, including the Partnership's proposal, in order to identify all activities related to employers. The proposal yielded eight pages of employer-related activities, which were then placed into the framework of the NELC EPM. This matrix was extremely valuable in helping employers and other partners see a clear, coherent picture of how employers were being asked to participate, at what stage, and gave them an idea of what it might entail. NELC also worked with the state of Colorado on a similar task, searching through state documents

(including materials on workforce development, one-stop career centers, literacy, and Teaming for Results) to cross reference the material, identify employer tasks, and reduce duplication.

Strategy: The Colorado Community College and Occupational Education System (CCCOES) uses the EPM model as a tool for organizing information on employer involvement. Employers are involved in advisory councils and community partnerships to help guide local school-to-career system-building; presentations to schools, community groups, and groups of employers; curriculum reform around school-to-career; student job shadowing and teacher internships; and technical college advisory committees. The EPM provides a useful tool for CCCOES to use when meeting and working with employers and Chambers of Commerce in the 81 partnerships in the six regions across the state.

Strategy: By organizing information, partnerships can help employers understand that they are not being asked to complete every activity in the NELC EPM; rather, the intention is to create a web of businesses that as a group will cover many of the listed activities. The Public Education and Business Coalition in Denver, which houses the Denver School-to-Career Partnership, works with interested employers to show them how their efforts would fit into the larger school-to-career system. For example, the Denver Center for the Performing Arts provides excellent teacher externships, whereas Charles Schwab, Inc. works on components such as creating high-quality student internships and developing a training module for teachers on workplace competencies; no one company is asked to fill every need.

3. Focus on initial partnership development as a very important stage.

The initial stages of partnership development are crucial. Partners must take the time to focus on the *process* of partnership development, taking stock of where each partner is, building a clear communications system, and thoughtfully mapping out where they want the partnership to go. Businesses must recognize the need to work differently when working with schools. This recognition, rather than "slowing things down," will instead make for a more efficient and sustainable school-to-career system.

Strategy: In an attempt to focus on process and systematic program development, the Jefferson County School-to-Career Partnership hired a facilitator who was not from any of their organizations, and whose role is to move along decision-making processes, facilitate meetings, and advise on how to keep processes focused and on task. Partners point out that the head of the Chamber of Commerce has become more process oriented as a result of the work with the school system and is seeking a better balance between process and results when working with the district. Many employers and other partners emphasize the need to build trust first, suggesting that consensus will follow. Employers also state that in terms of program development, there must be sufficient "threshold relations" before partners are ready to prioritize activities and address specific components.

Strategy: In addition to general differences in cultures among partners (see Breakthrough #5 for discussion), each partner enters a partnership at a certain stage of readiness for collaborative work around school-to-career. It is important to recognize that this is normal, take stock of where partners are, and function accordingly. Many employers point to an initial "sorting out" phase in which mismatches occurred if the "taking stock" phase was neglected. For example, Schwab recognized early on in its work in Denver's school-to-career system that others in the partnership--both employers and educators--were at different stages or had different priorities. Their recognition that "we can't expect the rest of the world to operate at the same speed that Schwab operates at" led them to step back and strategically identify how they should work with all of the partners and which ones were the best "fit" for specific components.

Strategy: It is essential to develop a clear, two-way communication system between partners--particularly between business and education. In helping to develop the Weld County School-to-Career Partnership, Kodak recognized that business needs to look at the situation from schools' perspectives and have clear communications with education systems. Kodak's analogy with other employers was that when a company orders supplies, it gives the suppliers specifications to meet; yet, even though schools are every company's supplier, they were rarely given even broad specifications for what a successful student should know. Coors Brewing Company also recognized the value of business and education working together when they invited teachers to attend a company program logic control class. The two attending teachers not only learned a great deal about logic control and how to apply it to their classes, but ended up pointing out the value of some old equipment that Coors couldn't use anymore. Coors donated the equipment to the schools and got a tax write-off. The teachers have set up their own lab in their school and developed an articulation agreement with the unified technical institute for a 2+2 program for the students.

4. Involve all stakeholders--from the very beginning, if possible.

Involving the necessary stakeholders is essential to building a sustainable partnership. Employers, educators, parents, and students must be involved. Some partnerships were successful in going beyond the traditional to include a wider variety of partners. Many employers stressed the importance of involving partners from the very beginning, which increases the opportunity for true buy-in. Above all, employers emphasized the need for consistency in their involvement so that other partners understand that business is committed and eager to work collaboratively to build a true partnership.

Strategy: Many partnerships are exploring a variety of mechanisms to involve parents and students in school-to-career partnerships. In Loveland, community partners are working on a media blitz to educate parents. The local newspaper editor has been an ardent supporter and plans to do a big marketing spread in the spring of 1998. Employer partners fund and participate in other promotional activities. For example, employers in Pikes Peak make presentations to parents on the need for technical skills in the workplace to debunk the misconception that school-to-career is not for "college bound" kids. Kodak also realized the need to include parents in the system, and is now making presentations at service group

meetings (e.g., Rotaries and Kiwanis) and school-based meetings to educate parents on what school-to-career is and how it can help, not hinder, their children. Kodak is also providing information to their employees, many of whom have children in the school system. In addition, Kodak is working to add a diverse group of parents and students (including college-bound and at-risk students) to the committees in their school-to-career governance structure because they recognize that they need to include such input before they can be completely successful.

Strategy: Many employers emphasized the importance of ensuring local school system buy-in by educating school board members and including them in the partnership. Employers pointed out that school boards are particularly active in Colorado; they are locally elected, and they oversee the schools and school administration. The School-to-Career Partnership in Jefferson County and partnerships elsewhere are working to provide information to the school board and include them in planning. Among the employers who work with school boards, a common finding was that there are both advocates and people who do not believe in school-to-career on the school boards they deal with. Kodak indicated that as their partnership progresses, they will attempt to include a "non-believer," since that input is valuable and helps inform the progress of the system.

Strategy: In addition to the "usual" partners, some Colorado school-to-career partnerships are considering throwing the net even wider. As previously mentioned, Coors Brewing Company came up with the innovative idea of involving a vendor--a trucking company that Coors uses--who now goes out and speaks on school-to-career. Kodak initially targeted other large employers in their partnership but recognized that it was missing crucial input and is working now to include smaller businesses. And as part of its national strategy, Charles Schwab actively communicates with suppliers and clients about what it is doing in school-to-careers.

5. Recognize and take into account organizational/cultural differences.

Employers emphasized the importance of acknowledging that there are differences in organizational cultures between the arenas of education and business, as well as among various types of businesses. The simple recognition that this is quite normal, and should be expected, is a powerful lesson for many partners. This is difficult in any education-business partnership, but working on school-to-career reform is in many ways more challenging because partners are working to build and align new systems and must be willing to reconsider their own traditional ways of operating. Partnerships should work to acknowledge these differences, ensure that they are revisited as needed, and work collaboratively to forge a plan that all partners can live with and support.

Strategy: It is crucial for all partners to understand the economic makeup of an area, keep abreast of its changing structure and needs, and comprehend the implications for school-to-career. The recent history of Denver's private sector illustrates the need to understand the economic climate in order to be able to adapt. Over the past ten years, Denver has experienced a huge shift in the makeup of companies headquartered in the city. The only wholly-owned businesses now in Denver are primarily small businesses, whereas ten years ago there were

many large companies headquartered in Denver. This changes the makeup of the business community dramatically--and, in particular, changes their view of the commitment to their community regarding the type and scale of interaction. The Denver School-to-Career Partnership recognizes these changes and makes the effort to be sure that they are aware of and responsive to the changing climate.

Strategy: Relatedly, it is important to recognize and understand the cultural differences between small and large businesses. In Colorado, mirroring nationwide trends, a very large percentage (around 90%) of businesses have fewer than 50 employees; thus, small businesses exert a lot of pressure on the public education system. Many are extremely small (fewer than ten employees) or even individual entrepreneurs. While it seems obvious that small and large businesses have very different cultures and abilities to respond to or participate in school-to-career, this is often not factored into the development of partnerships. Some small businesses have the perception that school-to-career is just (or primarily) for large businesses, and partnerships need to be sensitive to this. For example, while a larger business might be able to afford time to work more systemically on an issue like curriculum development, a smaller business might be able to provide a high-quality internship to a single student. In Summit County, the employer community is comprised almost entirely of small businesses, and their input into school-to-career is coordinated by the Chamber of Commerce, which helps them develop a role appropriate for their businesses.

Strategy: It is also essential to recognize and understand the cultural differences between education and business. Most school-to-career partners--employers and educators alike--can point to an example of how a misunderstanding or failure to understand the ramifications of these differences can cause a serious barrier. Educators complain that business people don't understand that school-to-career can't occur at the same quick pace of product development; rather, it must unfold at the slower pace of education reform. Employers maintain that the business community is "quantum leaps ahead" and shouldn't be held back by school bureaucracies. But the real issue has become clear as partnerships develop: school-to-career engages business in a different way, and schools and businesses must understand each others' organizational culture in order to develop a strong partnership. Jefferson County partners pointed out that the very basic idea that business and education have different cultures, norms, and views about the role of education can be a bigger barrier than a partnership expects, and should be addressed. Charles Schwab found that in working with educators and school systems, it is essential to be responsive to differences in timing and language. Schwab therefore has unfolded program components sequentially--starting with student internships and teacher externships to help students and faculty to understand what Schwab can offer in school-to-career--instead of expecting the schools to automatically adapt at a more rapid pace. In addition, Schwab notes that it is important to learn the language of educators because otherwise it is far too easy to start off on the wrong foot accidentally. For example, Schwab wanted to setup a system to "track" high school juniors and seniors into their postsecondary options, but quickly discovered that "tracking" was a term to which educators object.

6. Prioritize areas of emphasis and make strategic use of resources.

After identifying common needs and carefully structuring a partnership, the next step is working to sustain the long-term commitment and support of partners. Sustaining the partnership means focusing on the strategies that need to be in place in order for school-to-career to continue and grow over the next ten years and more. These strategies include prioritizing the work of the partnership, making targeted use of available resources, and strategically linking with existing high-quality programs to align similar work. By ensuring that the partnership's work is carefully managed, employers and other partners can help prevent overload and develop integrated, sustainable systems.

Strategy: It is essential to make strategic use of the time and involvement of other employers on partnership planning committees. When Kodak brought together a group of employers in northern Colorado to talk about school-to-career, they offered the commitment that if each company would identify an individual to work on committees, a Kodak employee--together with a staff person from Hewlett Packard--would do all the groundwork and administration, and would only call on those individuals to confirm whether or not they were on the right track. This gained the partnership a lot of support, especially in the beginning of this new type of initiative, when companies weren't quite sure what the partnership would be about. Employers in Pikes Peak were also anxious to provide direct services, but unsure of how and to what extent they wanted to participate in planning committees. The School-to-Career Coordinator responded by putting the partnership's plans into a timeline, then working with the business people to get their input on the plans. However it is structured, partnerships need to be sure that employers' involvement in governance represents a good use of their scarce time. Prior to the school-to-career partnership in Loveland, employers simply took on assignments on a project by project basis; now they are trying to understand their contributions in terms of the larger picture. Employers have been overloaded in the past; now, the Partnership is working to alleviate duplication and provide focused, in-depth experiences for kids.

Strategy: Partnerships are also prioritizing and making strategic use of programmatic resources such as money and in-kind donations. Partners in Greeley include large companies that donate money and equipment. The School-to-Career Partnership is working to coordinate those resources in order to have the focus, programs, and resources that will provide the most impact for kids. The Denver School-to-Career Partnership streamlined their grant-making process to ensure that their limited resources will have a powerful effect. In their first year, the Partnership started working with a targeted group of five high schools. The next year, they widened their efforts to include all the schools, but found this method to be too diffuse. In 1997, they went competitive and required schools to describe what they would do with the full support of the Partnership in order to build on the high-quality programs that are already in place and identify advanced sites that are close to the school-to-career model.

7. Build in flexibility to allow local resources and needs to shape components of the partnership.

School-to-career has always emphasized flexibility, allowing states and communities to customize their partnerships and systems. Each community engaged in a school-to-career partnership will have different needs, resources, and levels of support and readiness. It is important to articulate clearly the understanding that the school-to-career system will reflect the unique needs and resources of the community. Partnerships should be responsive to local conditions and build in the flexibility to craft the best solution. While the main components of school-to-career are the same across communities, localities may choose to implement the components in a different order and using different strategies.

Strategy: Relationships and strategies should be flexible and responsive to the community, so that partnerships customize according to local needs and circumstances. The curriculum enhancement model that was developed by Lutheran Medical with a local middle school is an example. After investing significant resources in the planning of a five-hour health career day, Lutheran felt there was little return on its investment and little real impact on students. After discussions with the school principal and faculty it was decided that Lutheran would play a more hands-on and ongoing role with the school. As a result, the curriculum enhancement model was developed with the goals of improving student academic performance, giving students a wellness message, and providing a health career message.

Strategy: Large companies can commit local branches to involvement while at the same time giving those branches the flexibility to customize their interactions with local school-to-career partners. Norwest Banks has been integral in school-to-career in Colorado, but its small branch in Loveland didn't have the resources to do some of the things that the bigger branches could do. The mandate from the top was that Norwest would be involved in school-to-career, but the flexibility was built in for local branches to define their own type of involvement. The School-to-Career Coordinator in Loveland, therefore, worked individually with the smaller branch and supported them as they defined the terms for their involvement, and, as a result, has a great relationship with both the little branch and the larger company of Norwest.

8. Emphasize the importance of coordinating strategies.

School-to-career is about forging strategic, innovative relationships, and well-defined coordinating functions are key to maintaining these relationships. Employers emphasized the need for a coordinated approach to individual companies and the employer community as a whole, and many educators valued having a centralized access point into the business community. Local flexibility is very important, and the value of allowing for innovative ways of addressing an issue like this one is reflected in the variety of coordinating strategies that communities in Colorado are employing.

Strategy: Employers invariably identified having a single point of contact as extremely useful in facilitating their involvement in school-to-career. Many partnerships have hired a full-time

school-to-career coordinator whose roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and agreed upon by all partners. This strategy is only useful, however, when the coordinators have the time and authority to carry out their duties. Coordinators who are part-time, or who are responsible for an area that is too large (e.g., multiple districts), can only offer a limited degree of service to business and other partners. The Jefferson County School-to-Career Partnership recognized this as important and is working on a jointly agreed-upon statement on the responsibilities of the coordinator and partners.

Strategy: To further refine coordination, some partnerships identify a single point of contact who is responsible for school-to-career coordination within an individual school. Schwab emphasized that activities progress faster when there is a school-based individual who understands school-to-career and can help all the partners work together. In addition, a dedicated high school school-to-career coordinator can take advantage of public resources, such as the state level partnership or regional centers, helping to identify resources and best practices.

Strategy: Many partnerships use an intermediary organization to coordinate between business and education. The Public Education and Business Coalition helps link businesses to schools through programmatic work, brokering, and serving as a quasi-umbrella organization, housing the Denver School-to-Career Partnership and also one of Colorado's Regional Resource Centers. Other communities use the Chamber of Commerce to help businesses define how they can link with schools and what resources they need to meet goals, and to help schools understand how best to use businesses.

Strategy: School-to-career leaders throughout the state are attempting to provide centralized sources of information and services. Colorado has a system of six Regional Resource Centers which provide access to best practice information and technical assistance around developing and implementing school-to-career partnerships. The Resource Centers are relatively new, but plan to offer services such as databases listing employers and their interest/involvement in school-to-career in order to facilitate coordinated, strategic matching across communities.

9. Use data to inform progress and guide strategies.

Gathering and using data to guide and evaluate the planning process, program development, and system-building efforts can add great value to a partnership's efforts. Data can be used to include input from a wide variety of stakeholders, to show how their expressed needs are being met, and to measure and articulate the impact of a school-to-career system. In addition, encouraging all partners to rely on research in continuously evaluating and improving program components will lead to an overall improvement of the system.

Strategy: Kodak recognized that gathering and communicating data proves useful in soliciting input and conveying the value of school-to-career to a wide variety of stakeholders, including other employers, parents, school boards, and school systems. As previously mentioned, Kodak offered to pay for and administer assessment (on a voluntary basis) to their employees' school-

aged children in order to provide these parents with some hard data about how well their children are being prepared for various careers. In addition, employers on the state's Tech Prep/School-to-Career Advisory Committees (including agriculture, business, marketing, health, special populations, trade and industry, consumer and family, vocational student organization unit, and school-to-career management) recognize the importance of impact and other evaluation data and have expressed an interest in seeing this information and using it to change strategies.

Strategy: Employers stress the importance of partners relying on updated data (e.g., labor market analysis). For example, Coors Brewing Company projects that there will be many vacancies in technical maintenance at Coors and other companies due to retirement. These jobs require an AA degree and pay well, but there are few students in the pipeline. The Colorado Department of Labor and Employment distributes a pamphlet to schools entitled "Colorado Job Outlook," but the challenge is to get more schools to use this information. Understanding and use of this kind of information would be beneficial to all school-to-career partnerships.

10. Recognize the value of *external* support.

Like any community-based reform effort, school-to-career depends upon the support of the larger community to be successful. It is not enough to have strong champions of school-to-career inside the partnership; all partners must work to develop the support of members of the community who are external to the partnership. The state of Colorado has gone out of its way to develop strong and visible support for school-to-career from the highest levels of government and business. Local communities and regions have also developed unique mechanisms to increase support. Employers point out that while some initially viewed school-to-career less favorably, that perception is changing very quickly because of the support of the state government, Chambers of Commerce around the state, and increasing support from the general public.

Strategy: Colorado developed a role for a top-level business person to serve as a high-profile champion of their efforts--the state's School-to-Career Advocate. The Advocate is someone who has a statewide presence and name recognition. The role of the Advocate was designed for someone who generally represents a larger company that has the ability to impact a whole industry. The Advocate provides a consistent, well-presented message about what school-to-career is and how and why businesses are involved in it, and can point interested companies to appropriate partnerships and resources. Many employers and partnerships across Colorado point to the importance of this role as a "validator" who can convince businesses and other community members of the value of school-to-career. The first Advocate, the CEO of Norwest Banks, extends the model to enhance awareness of support of school-to-career within his own company as well (see Breakthrough #11).

Strategy: It is also important to cultivate high-level political support for school-to-career within the state and community. In Colorado, school-to-career has been a leading item on the agenda at the highest levels and is housed within the Lieutenant Governor's office. The

Lieutenant Governor has been an articulate proponent and the state has created an Interagency Team to help align systems in support of school-to-career. Many employers involved in school-to-career partnerships point to the significant advantage of having this visible support from the top, suggesting that it adds momentum to their efforts. Companies also emphasize the value of having strong support from local politicians and others who are active in the community, such as school board members and parent groups.

Strategy: Many partnerships seek out innovative ways to engage industry associations or groups. The Society for Human Resource Management had a promotional campaign around workforce preparedness and is encouraging human resources directors to get their organizations more involved in education initiatives that connect education and the world of work. This not only is a more effective and economical way to get the word out on school-to-career, but the very fact that it is being promoted by peers, under the aegis of an industry group, helps to validate its worth.

Strategy: It is important to know the target audience's perception of school-to-career in order to provide the kinds of information that will help them understand. For example, the Colorado School-to-Career Partnership commissioned a survey of employer partners to assess the level of awareness, involvement, and satisfaction of employers in partnerships. The same concept could be applied to other stakeholder groups, for example by surveying parents to understand what they want from their children's school systems. In the fall of 1997, Jefferson County conducted a survey to gauge community satisfaction with the education system. They targeted the whole community, including parents with children in school (by sending surveys home with the kids) and individuals who did not necessarily have children in school (by placing a survey as an ad in the newspaper). The surveys indicated that school-to-career tenets were consistent with what people wanted in the public education system.

Strategy: It is also important to strategically develop and communicate the message. The Weld County School-to-Career Partnership has a subcommittee that is working on identifying how best to increase community awareness, in particular through the business environment. Still in its initial stages, the committee is trying to identify the opportunities and systems for communicating the message of school-to-career. Partnerships can also capitalize on the diversity of their members by providing information to those partners, who can distribute it to their respective stakeholder groups (e.g., parents and teachers). The Colorado Community College and Occupational Education System, which coordinates tech prep and school-to-career, uses a newsletter to get information out to a broad group of employers and schools. The newsletter is also available on the Colorado Department of Education's CD-ROM Resource Bank and will soon be accessible through their web site as well.

Strategy: Employers make use of innovative ways to spread the word about school-to-career. Kodak, for example, focuses on the fact that many of their employees are also parents, and works to educate them about school-to-career. As mentioned, Coors Brewing Company talked with a vendor about the value of school-to-career and ended up with a new advocate in the region. A former executive from Lutheran Hospital spent a year as a Business Education

Partnership Coordinator for the Colorado School-to-Career Partnership delivering the school-to-career message across the state based on the Lutheran experience.

II. Recognize the value of *internal* support.

Support from outside the defined partnership is important, but even more essential to the sustainability of school-to-career is support from within. Among employers, this means support and commitment from all levels of a company, including top-level management, local managers, and employees. This advocacy from within includes both personal commitment on the part of involved business people and also organizational structures that encourage and support participation. Colorado businesses have developed some innovative strategies to engage and maintain that commitment.

Strategy: High-level endorsement from the CEO of a company is a necessary and very valuable boost for a successful school-to-career partnership. In many cases, CEO commitment may be the reason for a company's initial involvement. For example, the leadership of Charles Schwab in school-to-career started with the CEO's passion and commitment. He realized, however, that if it was to go beyond his own personal involvement, he would have to "sell" it internally. The partnership in Greeley also recognized that school-to-career is about policy development and thus needs CEO-level commitment. The School-to-Career Coordinator is seeking out management level contacts in area organizations who will bring the message back to their companies.

Strategy: In addition to top-level commitment, there must be mechanisms in place throughout the company to support local involvement in school-to-career. For example, the CEO of Norwest Banks is an ardent supporter (and serves as Colorado's School-to-Career Advocate--see the first Strategy under Breakthrough #10). In addition to his personal commitment, he has provided the guidance for the involvement of Norwest's local branches, while allowing them the flexibility to structure their involvement according to the unique needs of each community. This role, crafted by the local bank in each community, is institutionalized as part of the larger bank culture and structure because branch managers are evaluated in part on their effectiveness in participating in school-to-career as part of Norwest's community banking philosophy. Branch managers also conduct peer-to-peer recruitment by meeting with local Chambers and businesses to explore their willingness to be part of the partnership and their potential availability to provide work-based learning and other activities.

Strategy: Employers find it important to demonstrate the value of school-to-career to employees throughout the company. McDonald's points out that their ability to "sell" school-to-career by showing its value is essential because participation by franchises cannot necessarily be required. Schwab indicated that they had to constantly "sell" school-to-career, from the CEO level to the HR Director to the frontline supervisor and site manager levels, and, finally, to the workers themselves, because larger businesses don't operate in a pure hierarchy. Without the top 10-12 people, Schwab's divisions strongly resemble a group of small businesses. In addition, there is always internal churning. The presence of new managers necessitates constant

selling. Therefore, Schwab developed a business model to demonstrate how school-to-career benefits the company in the short term by increasing the job pool, and in the long term by working with schools to change the way that subjects are taught. On the level of individual workers, Schwab found that it is generally not too difficult to sell the idea initially because people want an opportunity to help a young person. Once students have been incorporated into the workplace, their contributions cement the value of involvement. As one Schwab employee pointed out, "There is a lot of support and it's growing, because as people understand the capacity of students...our involvement only expands."

12. Work to institutionalize school-to-career in order to build a strong, sustainable system.

In order for school-to-career partnerships to ensure sustained buy-in and commitment, consistency of principles over time, and a true realignment of resources, partners must work together to institutionalize school-to-career. For employers, this means strengthening business policies in ways that infuse and support school-to-career, both within individual companies and among the broader community of employers. For all partners, it also means a recognition that systemic change takes time and commitment over the long haul.

Strategy: Employers start by institutionalizing school-to-career within individual companies. For example, Kodak announced a change in its hiring practices starting in December of 1997 whereby graduates who have been out of school five years or less must show their transcripts (or proof of GED) to be considered for entry-level jobs. In addition, the Denver-based branch of Charles Schwab has been working in many ways to institutionalize the components and principles of school-to-career within their company structure, including where it is housed, how students are trained, and how teachers are involved. School-to-career used to be informally structured and housed in the human resources department. Now, however, it resides in its own department that has its own budget and cost center, and Schwab is looking to increase the staff. It has also been incorporated into the company's training program to ensure it is included in how Schwab trains and recruits staff. School-to-career has to be part of the staffing model, because participating students are in school and have different scheduling needs. The training structure works with the school schedule and empowers students to do more than general clerical tasks. As highlighted earlier, Schwab also reserves at least one slot in each of its internal management training classes (looking at subjects such as project management and effective team building) for teachers. One employee sees the impact of school-to-career as "kind of like a good virus, working its way into the whole system" and touching many different areas of the company.

Strategy: Institutionalization of school-to-career is also occurring within the broader community of employers. Building outward from the efforts of individual companies, employers also recognize that it is essential to infuse school-to-career into the structure and policies of employer groups. School-to-career has become an integral part of Chamber of Commerce activities in Jefferson County; it is part of new member orientation and part of all Chamber presentations. In Denver, the School-to-Career Partnership recognized that the

Chamber of Commerce had a tacit buy-in, but Chamber leadership changed on an annual basis. Now, buy-in is more assured because education issues are handled by a Council--a more static entity within the Chamber's structure--and school-to-career is one of the three threads within the Council. The Education Council of the Chamber defines itself as the "rapid response team," responding to education requests for business involvement.

Strategy: The recognition that systemic change takes time, that it is a long, slow process, and that it requires patience is significant. The School-to-Career Partnership in Greeley emphasizes that the collaborative process is a must, and time has to be built in to nurture the process. Kodak also recognizes that building a sustainable partnership "has got to be a slow, deliberate process--but an important one; important for the future of our kids as well as for the economy." An employer summed it up by declaring that business must show other school-to-career partners that they are committed and that "Once we step up to the plate, we need to be in it for all nine innings."

IV. What Do Employers Need?

Employers in Colorado have made great progress in developing active, strong school-to-career partnerships, as evidenced by the breakthroughs identified in the previous section. However, significant challenges still remain as employers strive to build a collaborative, sustainable school-to-career system. The following section discusses barriers that employers believe they need to work on, both among themselves and with the support of the larger school-to-career community. Although employers did not necessarily state the barriers in the context of the NELC Employer Participation Model, the section is organized into its three broad categories of employers working with students and teachers, strengthening company practice, and building a system.

Many of the barriers have parallels in the previous section, indicating that some companies and communities have come up with innovative ways to deal with these challenges. However, these are issues that most companies--even those who are successfully addressing the issues--identified as continuing challenges.

Employers Working Directly with Students and Teachers

1. Access to quality information.

The use of the NELC Employer Participation Model by employers illustrates what companies can do to customize and make strategic use of quality tools that fit their needs. However, many employers and communities identify a mismatch of information: there is an overload at some points and not enough in other areas. In particular, employers would like to know more about how to structure and implement quality work-based learning. Among the specific types of information employers feel they need are legal information related to school-to-career, such as liability and child labor laws and any applicable tax credit information. In addition, employers identify the need for documentation of replicable models of curriculum development, career pathways, and professional development for teachers.

2. Better understanding of and links to data collection programs and more information about how to measure impact.

Employers and other partners struggle with how to measure their partnership's progress, quality, and success. For example, they believe that they will have an impact on the dropout rate, but that this will only become clear in the long term. As a result, they are looking to complement such future data with other, more immediate measurements such as increases in skill levels. The value of these types of data is twofold: it offers important guidance for the development of the school-to-career system; and it is also useful in demonstrating impact to partnership members and the wider community. In addition, there is a need for better utilization of data already available--such as labor market projections and economic development plans--within schools and partnerships.

3. Improved coordination around teacher preparation and activities.

Many employers and other partners believe that teacher preparation and in-service training are inadequate in the areas of school-to-career and systems change. Additional hands-on training in colleges and teacher training programs, together with increased emphasis on academic and vocational teachers working together, is necessary for school-to-career to become infused into the schools.

4. More clearly defined roles for business.

At both state and local levels, employers expressed an interest in having clearly defined roles suggested by educators. Many employers, particularly in areas where school-to-career partnerships are just starting to take shape, would like to have a better idea of what they are being asked to do before they offer their full commitment. These employers would like to see school districts offering employers clear definitions of the different kinds of roles they can play within a school-to-career partnership and the kind of commitment each role entails. This information would assist employers to target their resources and participation strategically.

Employers Strengthening Company Practice

1. More internal company support and institutionalization of school-to-career.

Employers see a real need to do a better job of educating employees on what school-to-career is, how the company is involved, and why this is an important commitment. There is a lack of short, clear, descriptive information that presents it in employer terms. Employees at all levels of an organization may vaguely recognize the term "school-to-career," but often understanding is limited. In addition to a lack of appropriate information, there are internal barriers to understanding the capabilities of students as well as the value of business participation. Even among companies that are making headway on this issue, there is consensus that there needs to be more support and more consistent institutionalization. Other companies are at the very beginning stages and could benefit from a better understanding of the issues around institutionalization of school-to-career, including its value and models within the operations of a business.

2. Better preparation of employers working with students and teachers.

Students and teachers participating in workplace learning opportunities have different needs and place different demands on employers. Employers need to be prepared in order to create positive experiences for students and teachers. Employers articulate the need for training that supports current employees and is responsive to students' unique developmental and scheduling needs. Employers are looking at ways of adapting their own training programs or adopting new ones in order to support employees in their new school-to-career roles as mentors and co-workers with youth. Some employers implement mentor training programs in order to help ensure that issues unique to students in their workplaces are addressed. Others are

interested in learning more about outlining roles and responsibilities of supervisors, defining expectations for students, and developing student learning plans. Several employers expressed a desire to establish stronger connections with teachers and schools to ensure that objectives are understood and efforts are coordinated.

Employers Building a System

1. More consistent and widespread external support.

While employers and other partners have made great strides in raising awareness and understanding of school-to-career, many point out the need for better communications among non-participating employers, school boards, parents (see below), teachers, Chambers of Commerce, and the community as a whole. Employers cite the need to gain buy-in from teachers by showing how school-to-career is different and overcoming the vocational stigma that conflicts with the "have to go to college" mentality. Partners also indicate that organized labor needs to be better represented in partnerships at the state, regional, and local levels. And finally, local political and school support, primarily in the form of school boards and teacher unions, needs to be increased.

2. Particular emphasis on the area of parent involvement and support.

Employers and other school-to-career partners are not satisfied with the level of parental involvement and support in school-to-career systems. Many parents haven't been actively invited to become involved and don't understand school-to-career and what it can mean for their children. The prevailing bias among parents is still toward academics and college preparation, with the view that school-to-career would interfere with rather than support that goal. Partnerships are looking for strategies to communicate with parents to promote understanding and generate support.

3. More strategies to involve small businesses in school-to-career partnerships.

Despite the innovative ways that many small businesses have worked with school-to-career partnerships, there is an overall lack of small business participation. Employers themselves note a lack of time and information structured specifically to engage small businesses. School-to-career partners would like to see more strategies for involving larger numbers of small businesses--perhaps in the form of an Employer Participation Model specifically for small businesses.

4. More progress on business-education communication/coordination.

One of the single most reiterated barriers identified by employers and other partners is that business and education traditionally operate very differently, and this often is a significant barrier to school-to-career partnerships. Recognizing that there are differences, and that this is normal and expected, is the first step. However, even those partnerships that feel they have

made significant progress in improving business-education communication and coordination emphasize the need to continually focus on this dynamic and would like to further refine strategies for improvement.

5. Continuing work to align existing systems and programs, with an eye toward sustainability.

One of the biggest challenges identified by employers and other partners is aligning what is already going on. This is an issue at every level, from identifying and coordinating individual programs at a single school, to aligning resources across districts and regions, to weaving together state and Federal funding streams and programs. Employers would like to find out more about collaborating versus competing for scarce resources, integrating similar programs, and aligning systems with similar goals. Employers also articulate the need for a better and more widespread understanding of the National School-to-Work Opportunities Act. In particular, there seems to be confusion around how Federal School-to-Work funds are to be used. The Act designates that these funds be used as venture capital to help partnerships in developing systems. Partnerships must recognize the need for a reconfiguration and reallocation of funding streams and the critical role that employers can play in helping this to happen. Employers and other partners also indicated a need for more thought and activity around sustaining commitment at all levels: local, regional, state, and multi-state/national.

6. Assistance from the national level.

This is a critical juncture for school-to-career as a national initiative. School-to-career must be clearly defined and strategically promoted on a national level as well as from within communities. Business partners identified a need for renewed efforts at the national level to ensure the continued growth of school-to-career initiatives. Partners also felt it would be valuable if proponents at the national level worked together with national educational institutions and professional organizations (e.g., National Science Foundation) to model what school-to-career is and can do, especially in the area of high-quality academic preparation. Employers and other partners felt that they had reached a stage where assistance in the area of systems change could be useful. Some partners noted that an important challenge for school-to-career is how it is structured at the Federal level. There is a perception, for example, that the national school-to-work evaluation is driving many decisions at the local level. This has had the effect of interfering with the development of the infrastructure needed to sustain a school-to-career system.

V. CONCLUSION

There is a sense of excitement, of possibility, among employers working in school-to-career partnerships. The potential impact of school-to-career to better prepare today's students for successful, satisfying careers acts as a powerful motivating force. Partnerships have been making incredible progress toward building sustainable, high-quality school-to-career systems responsive to local conditions and created out of a truly collaborative process.

Within school-to-career partnerships, employers serve as leaders in many ways. Statewide, regional, and local examples abound: in the inspiration and support generated by the CEO of Norwest Banks as statewide School-to-Career Advocate; in Kodak's breakthrough in using NELC's Employer Participation Model to coordinate the efforts of regional employers, weaving them into a cohesive, strategically directed initiative; and in the pioneering work of Charles Schwab to systematically provide in-depth work-based experiences for youth and faculty in the Denver area. The strong leadership roles illustrated by these examples are echoed in communities throughout Colorado, as evidenced by the creative breakthroughs and strategies contained in this report.

At the same time, there are areas in which business partners are struggling. Employers clearly identify some challenging issues that they need to work on, including some in which they look to the larger school-to-career community for help. As the community of employers engaged in school-to-career initiatives continues to grow and advance, there will be a continued need to support their efforts by sharing lessons learned, helping employers work through challenges, and identifying innovative solutions. The NELC is in a unique position to help meet these needs not only in Colorado but throughout the nation.

APPENDIX A
THE COLORADO SCHOOL-TO-CAREER PARTNERSHIP

The vision for the Colorado School-to-Career Partnership is an integrated, standards based educational system, tied to economic development, that ensures through partnerships that all of its young people are prepared to excel in the competitive and dynamic global market place. The Colorado School-to-Career Partnership will use three major strategies to accomplish the School-to-Career mission: school-based learning, work-based learning, and connecting activities.

School-Based Learning

The School-to-Career philosophy is based on curriculum relevancy and strong academic standards. Teachers play the important role of ensuring students understand how each academic activity relates to a future job task. This integration of curriculum with career awareness will allow students to better understand their role in the workplace of tomorrow as they are learning today.

Work-Based Learning

This begins with exposing elementary school students to several career clusters. In middle school, students learn more about those clusters and the careers within each cluster through on-site workplace visits and guest speakers in the classroom. By high school, students have the opportunity to explore particular careers within their chosen cluster through shadowing, apprenticeships, internships, and part-time jobs. Once students graduate from high school, they are well-prepared to make their first career choice, whether they continue with higher education, or go directly into the workforce.

Connecting Activities

Established links between schools and businesses will connect students to work-based experience and future educational opportunities. Students will receive academic credit for work experience, and high schools will include career knowledge and exploration as a requirement for graduation. Students will also receive transition assistance from both school counselors and business mentors, whether they are going on to post-secondary education and training or enter the world of work.

This process allows students to learn core academics while also learning to apply them to a future career area. Teachers will be asked to integrate practical learning into their curriculum, and representatives of local businesses will present information to classes about their industry and skills. Businesses will also allow individual students and entire classrooms to visit on-site to observe day-to-day operations, and will hire interns and part-time workers so that students interested in a field will have a chance to explore it before making a career choice.

For more information, please refer to the Colorado School-to-Career Partnership web page, http://governor.state.co.us/gov_dir/ltgov/schooltowork/index.html, OR contact the Partnership at 1580 Logan Street, Suite 410, Denver, Colorado 80203. Telephone: (303) 894-2060. E-mail: school.to-career@state.co.us

APPENDIX B
NELC COMPANIES IN COLORADO

At the outset of the NELC Colorado Project, four companies that have played a leading part in directing the school-to-career work of NELC made the decision to bring their exemplary programs into the state. Their goals were to help students and teachers directly and to serve as models for other employers. These four, Ford Motor Company, Charles Schwab & Company, Inc., Eastman Kodak Company, and McDonald's Corporation USA, are directly and indirectly providing powerful examples of leadership to a growing list of other Colorado corporations.

Ford Motor Company

National Contact

Marcus A. Clark, Jr.
Manager, External & Governmental Education & Training Relations
Ford Motor Company World Headquarters
P.O. Box 1899, Room 306
Dearborn, MI 48121-1899
T: (313) 322-9231
F: (313) 845-5765

Colorado Contact

Larry Jacob
Human Resources Manager
Ford Microelectronics, Inc.
9965 Federal Drive
Colorado Springs, CO 80921-3698
T: (719) 528-7665
F: (719) 528-7674

Charles Schwab & Company, Inc.

National Contact

Ginnie Hebb
Project Manager, School to Careers
Charles Schwab & Co., Inc.
101 Montgomery Street
San Francisco, CA 94104
T: (415) 636-7305
F: (415) 627-7112

Colorado Contact

Randy Martinez
Manager of Training
Charles Schwab & Co., Inc.

4500 Cherry Creek Drive South, Suite 700
Denver, CO 80222
T: (303) 639-2408
F: (303) 639-2804

McDonald's Corporation USA

National Contact

Rogercarole Rogers
Staff Director, Employment Director
McDonald's Corporation
Kroc Drive
Oak Brook, IL 60521
T: (630) 623-6540
F: (630) 575-3392

Colorado Contact

Peter A. Casanova
Manager, Regional Human Resources
McDonald's Corporation
5251 DTC Parkway, Suite 300
Englewood, CO 80111
T: (303) 779-0444
F: (303) 779-4716

Eastman Kodak Company

National Contact

Cynthia A. Davies
Educational Consultant
Eastman Kodak Company
343 State Street
Rochester, NY 14650-0811
T: (716) 724-6476
F: (716) 724-0826

Colorado Contact

Lucille M. Mantelli
Director, Community Relations & Public Affairs
Kodak Colorado Division
9952 Eastman Park Drive
Windsor, CO 80551
T: (970) 686-4102
F: (970) 686-4154

APPENDIX C
NELC'S EMPLOYER PARTICIPATION MODEL

The NELC has developed the Employer Participation Model to help employers of all sizes customize their participation in school-to-work activities. Using the model as a foundation, companies can evaluate resources and target them to areas of opportunity. The NELC model comprises 56 specific activities in the following three broad categories.

Employers working with students and teachers

Employers Working Directly With Students: Employers can offer students a variety of opportunities to understand the kinds of work that today's workforce does every day and the link between "Learning and Earning."

Employers Working Directly With Teachers: Secondary and post-secondary faculty want to spend more time with business partners to increase their understanding of the culture and expectations of the workplace. Often, the resources are already available through industry and business organizations or from other business partnerships in other communities and states. Employers can also support the work of teachers directly and indirectly in local classrooms.

Employers Supporting the Work of Teachers: Employers support the work of teachers directly and indirectly in local classrooms in many areas, including: curriculum development, instructional materials, business practice advisement, industry skill standards, and technology.

Employers Strengthening Company Practice

Business culture has changed with the introduction of continuous improvement practices, strong "customer service" orientation, new technologies, and increasing webs of vendor relationships. In order to develop a qualified and committed workforce, some business practices need to change to support the new relationship with education providers.

Employers Building A System

America needs a higher-skilled workforce and American education is the primary source for that upgrade. Business working at every level of decision-making can bring focus and practical experience to workforce development. This chart lists recommendations at four levels that will support system development. The NELC strongly supports early and continued participation of the broadest possible groups of stakeholders.

For more information or to access the specific activities that occur under each of these broad categories, please refer to the NELC's web page: http://www.nelc.org OR contact the NELC at: ***National Employer Leadership Council,*** *National Alliance of Business, 1201 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20005. T: (202) 822-8027 or (800) 360-NELC; F: (202) 822-8026.*

APPENDIX D
NELC TOOLS AND RESOURCES DEVELOPED IN COLORADO

In the course of the NELC's work with the Colorado School-to-Career Partnership around employer involvement, resources were developed that other companies and partnerships may find useful. The tools and resources listed below were developed collaboratively by the NELC and state, regional, and local companies, and school-to-career partnerships in Colorado.

Summit County School-to-Career Employer Survey - A survey for employers that captures information on the nature and extent of past participation and future plans for participation in school-to-career activities.

Summit County School-to-Careér Educator Survey - A survey for educators that captures information on the nature and extent of past participation and future plans for participation in school-to-career activities.

Employers Working with Educators - A list of eighteen ways in which employers can work directly with students and teachers.

Colorado NELC Initiative Strategic Plan - An outline of activities for increasing employer participation at the state, regional, and local levels, and with national (NELC) involvement.

Colorado Workplan for Employer Involvement - A matrix that provides tasks, definition, stakeholder responsibilities, and timeframes for state, regional, and local level employer involvement.

Workplan for School-to-Career Advocate - A matrix of tasks, resources, and timelines for a state-level employer advocate for school-to-career.

Ford Motor Company Plan - A matrix of activities, resources, and timelines for implementing the Ford Academy of Manufacturing Sciences (FAMS) program.

Employer Participation Model of the Pikes Peak Region - A matrix of activities for employers building a system, strengthening company practice, and working with students and teachers.

Building a School-to-Work System Around a Facilitating Agency - A brief discussion of the reasons for and functions of an intermediary or facilitating agency in building a STW system.

Hall's Lifetime Toys: A Model - A model format for organizing and promoting a company's school-to-career activities to schools and communities.

These tools and resources are available from: ***National Employer Leadership Council,*** *National Alliance of Business, 1201 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20005. T: (202) 822-8027 or (800) 360-NELC; F: (202) 822-8026; http://www.nelc.org.*

Academy for Educational Development
1875 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 900
Washington, DC 20009-1202

(202) 884-8000
http://www.aed.org

National Employer Leadership Council
National Alliance of Business
1201 New York Avenue NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20005

(202) 822-8027
(800) 360-NELC
http://www.nelc.org